

day-time and then is put into a room alone and left to scream himself to exhaustion. These situations are liable to affect the whole course of the child's later development. It is in such moments that the child's worst phantasies of avenging dangers grip his mind. He has to deal with these by one method or another : whatever choice he makes will be fraught with consequences for his mental life.

Nowadays, a great many mothers, whose natural impulse would be to cherish and soothe the child who awakens in the night with terror, or calls he*r back after she has left him in bed, showing that he is unable to fall asleep without her comforting presence, have been persuaded into harsh, rigid treatment of the children on this mere theory that children " must not be spoilt " or allowed to tyrannise over adults, and that they should go on being left to scream " until they learn better ".* It is very necessary that this seriously mistaken doctrine should be challenged, and the grounds for its unwisdom made clear. Children who are in the grip of night terrors, or of any of the phobias described in the letters quoted in the body of the material^ cannot master these acute anxieties without the help of mother's or nurse's presence. If they receive this help at the onset of the

¹ " I wonder if you would help me with my problem. I should think it is a fairly common one, but I should like to know how you would deal with it. My little girl (now aged one year four months) has been kept to a regular routine where the right thing was done cheerfully. She was 'such a good little thing, although by no means a placid child, that all my friends wanted their babies to be like her. She went to bed happily and was left alone to fall off to sleep, and she would peep round her cot to see one go out of the ro'om. Suddenly at thirteen months she took'to screaming when left in hef cot. I had heard it said that if allowed to scream they would soon learn better. So for three nights we left her to scream, and she Worked herself up to an almost hysterical condition. After this the very sight of her cot caused her to scream,

and it was most distressing. Then we decided that we must prevent the screaming at all costs, so we sat with her until she went to sleep, which sometimes took over an hour, for often when nearly asleep she would open her eyes suspiciously to see if one was there. Next she started waking and screaming in the night, and I have often sat with her for two hours, while she watched to see that I did not leave her; She seemed to be afraid of falling asleep. This has gone on for three months during which time she has improved, in that she does not scream so violently. To-night for the first time, having told her to sing, I walked boldly out of the room and left her. She has now fallen asleep. I may say incidentally she has been cutting her back teeth during this period, but they cannot have been giving her much pain, as she has been so good in the daytime. I want you to criticise what I have done, so that were I faced with this problem with another child I should do the right thing. And what am I to do if she continues to wake in the night ? "